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TAGS: [PARM](#) [KNNP](#) [PREL](#) [AORC](#) [IAEA](#) [KZ](#) [AF](#) [SY](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: IAEA/BOG: THREE, POSSIBLY FOUR, MESA SEAT
CONTENDERS

Classified By: Ambassador Gregory L. Schulte for reasons 1.4 b and d

Summary

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Iran announced its candidacy for an IAEA Board of Governors seat 2008-2010 during a regional group meeting August 14 that also addressed the Syrian and Afghan candidacies. Arab members of the Middle East/South Asia (MESA) group, nine of the current 15 members, continued to back Syria in accordance with a March 2008 Arab League Summit decision. In response to observations by Pakistan and others that Syria had submitted its candidacy early, in January, the Indian Chair clarified, at Afghanistan's request, that there was no deadline for submission of candidacies.

¶2. (C) Given the composition of the group and the Indian Chair's neutral stance, it was unsurprising that no one backed Afghanistan. Afghanistan's Charge believes that Iran and Syria orchestrated Iran's play. However, it is also possible that Iran saw the contested field as an opportunity to make an improbable run for the Board in the same way it has recently trumpeted its improbable candidacy for the UNSC. Indian, Kazakh and other contacts provide us conflicting views on Kazakhstan's eligibility and viability as MESA candidate. Afghanistan may not be able to win but its candidacy is keeping the game open, perhaps for another state to challenge Syria successfully. End summary

Indian Chair Offers Advise for Afghanistan

¶3. (SBU) During a conversation with Ambassador Schulte on August 16, Indian Ambassador Kumar confirmed that Iran submitted its candidacy for the Board at the August 14 MESA meeting. According to Kumar, Iran argued that it had not had the opportunity to serve on the Board in recent years. Kumar now expects a lot of "shadow-boxing" in Vienna, demarches in capitals, and a lot of brinksmanship before the September General Conference that will decide Board composition.

¶4. (C) Kumar said he believed the MESA candidacy will go to a vote at the General Conference, although there could be a chance of a last-minute withdrawal by Syria if it expects a resounding defeat. As MESA chair, Kumar does not want to advise the Afghan Charge, who he characterizes as young and ambitious, but he recommended that the USG advise Afghanistan it must be hardened for a tough flight to the end, show that its candidacy is serious and not a last-minute idea (neither of the ambitious Charge's nor USG), demonstrate that the candidacy has full backing in Kabul, and start demarching in capitals and not just Vienna.

But is There Still a Chance for Kazakhstan?

¶15. (C) In a separate August 18 conversation with Ambassador Schulte, Kazakh Ambassador Abdrakhmanov said his country's candidacy for the MESA seat depended on Indian Ambassador Kumar, who, the Kazakh asserted, had promised to take all "formal and informal" steps to bring Kazakhstan into MESA. Abdrakhmanov said he would submit a formal application to MESA if Kumar advised him this was necessary, or he would proceed directly to submit Kazakhstan's Board candidacy if Kumar advised that Kazakhstan were accepted into MESA without a formal application. Abdrakhmanov thinks MESA would welcome Kazakhstan as a member, with the possible exception of Syria, which might argue that Kazakhstan should be a part of the Eastern European group. Abdrakhmanov expected Kumar to contact him August 18 or 19 with further recommendations.

¶16. (C) Ambassador Kumar also noted that he found it highly unlikely that MESA would agree to admit Kazakhstan at this point because, he thought, the Arab League would oppose competition for the Syrian candidacy, and Pakistan would oppose competition for its candidacy next year. Kumar continued that, "this (excluding Kazakhstan from MESA) is one issue on which there would be unanimous agreement."

Comment

¶17. (C) We have succeeded in the short-term goal of

derailing Syria's intent to ride the Arab consensus to an uncontested election to the Board. There remains confusion over Kazakh membership in MESA. If the MESA seat comes to a vote in the General Conference, which seems increasingly likely, votes for Iran or Syria could potentially cancel one another out. It is not at all clear that Afghanistan could win in a straight-up election, but its candidacy serves for now to keep the door open for another potential candidate to challenge Syria for the seat either within MESA or in a GC vote among regional candidates.

SCHULTE